

rejection of this consensus, but it would mandate by U.S. law that the United Nations act before the President can act.

I speak again. The U.S. Congress would be telling the President he must go to the U.N. and he must win their political game. We would be making our President win a political game that I do not want to put him in.

I believe the resolution is clear on what would be required of the President before he could act. U.N. politics takes a dominance in the Spratt amendment, not the one we are trying to support here today.

If he loses the U.N. political battle, the President comes back to this body, and just imagine the frenzy. Write those headlines. The President comes back a loser in U.N. politics, and the forces in this world will seize upon that, and we will be weaker, not stronger, more division, a horrible scenario. Please reject it. I know many Members want to vote yes/yes. That may be good politics, but it would be bad for the country.

Mr. Speaker, there are forces for good in this world, none greater than the U.S. Congress. Use our powers wisely. The world is watching.

ANNOUNCEMENT BY THE SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair must remind Members that positions of Senators may not be characterized beyond identifying a Senator as a sponsor of a measure.

Mr. HOLT. Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of the Spratt amendment to H.J. Res. 114. I applaud the respected gentleman from South Carolina, Mr. SPRATT, for his hard work and good sense on this amendment.

This proposal is not perfect. I also question whether this amendment will, in practice, serve as an adequate check on the Administration's rush to act unilaterally in Iraq.

But this Amendment is by far the best option we have on the floor today. It recognizes what the other two options on the floor do not: that while the U.S. may ultimately need to act alone to disarm Iraq, we should do so only if it is absolutely necessary.

The Spratt Amendment authorizes the use of the U.S. armed forces to support any new U.N. Security Council resolution that mandates the elimination, by force if necessary, of all Iraqi weapons of mass destruction.

If, in the absence of a satisfactory U.N. Security Council resolution, the President determines it is necessary to proceed with force, it calls on the President to seek the authorization of Congress and provides expedited consideration for authorization.

I firmly believe that military force should not be used until after the U.N. inspections. Force should not be used until all diplomatic channels have been exercised. And we should clearly understand what will be required for rebuilding the country. There are several good aspects of the Spratt Resolution worth emphasizing: it discusses force in the context of disarming Saddam Hussein, not as regime change; it places the burden of enforcing U.N. resolutions on the U.N. Security Council; and it allows the U.S. to act if the Security Council does not adequately fulfill its responsibility.

This is a reasoned approach that rejects the use of unilateral action, of preemptive action,

and preserves the checks and balances that are required of our government.

I urge my colleagues to support the amendment.

Mr. CONYERS. Mr. Speaker, I am supporting the Spratt amendment because it provides many safeguards to war—it authorizes the use of force through a new UN Security Council Resolution; however, should the UN not adopt a resolution sanctioning the use of force or not take any action at all, the amendment would allow the President, if he deemed the UN Security Council's action insufficient, to come to Congress to obtain authorization to use the United States Armed Forces against Iraq. Most importantly, the Spratt amendment allows Congress to retain its rightful role in the constitutional process as the body having the authority to declare war.

The Spratt amendment is an especially important safeguard—because it would give the United Nations, essentially, the World, time to examine the threat that Hussein poses and then, in a sobering fashion, make a determination as to whether a new resolution regarding the elimination of Iraq's weapons of mass destruction should be adopted or whether to use of force is the appropriate response to the threat that Saddam Hussein poses.

We must not move hastily to the sobering decision to use force against another country. As it was discovered yesterday, it is now known that the CIA has concluded Saddam Hussein is unlikely to initiate a chemical or biological attack against the United States. Based on this CIA assessment, an attack on Iraq could provide the very thing the President claims he is trying to forestall—the use of chemical or biological weapons by Saddam.

I believe it is extremely important that exhaust all avenues of peace, make use of all safeguards prior to sending our troops into battle. We cannot be injudicious, premature or inaccurate in our decision to go to war. The Spratt amendment makes the possibility of a unilateral attack on Iraq the last option—not the first. Let's give the UN and the U.S. a greater ability work towards a peaceful resolution of our concerns with Saddam Hussein.

Mr. CAPUANO. Mr. Speaker, the substitute amendment introduced by Mr. SPRATT improves on the base resolution, H.J. Res. 114, because it requires that the United States continue working with the United Nations to enforce existing Security Council Resolutions and to craft stronger resolutions addressing concerns over weapons of mass destruction in Iraq. Instead of simply handing the President a blank check to wage war, this amendment urges the President to continue working with the UN Security Council.

I will vote for the Spratt amendment because I believe it is a better alternative than the base resolution. I do not believe that the amendment will pass. If it does, however, I will vote No on final passage because I do not believe that the Spratt amendment does enough to explore all options resorting to war.

Mr. WAXMAN. Mr. Speaker, we face today one of the most important questions that can ever come before us as Members of Congress: whether to authorize the use of force, and commit the men and women of our armed forces to defend liberty and to protect the United States, at the possible cost of their lives—and the lives of many in a country far from our shores.

It is an issue Americans care deeply about. I have received hundreds of calls during the

past few weeks, and many of my constituents are raising similar and very serious concerns.

They are suspicious of the timing of this debate. They see political overtones to it, and question whether this vote is being used as political purposes.

Many are worried about the precedent of a preemptive and unilateral attack, and how that precedent might be used by other countries looking to justify aggressive and hostile acts.

Others have expressed doubts about the Bush Administration's handling of foreign policy. They point to the Administration's abysmal record on a series of international efforts, including the Kyoto Protocol, the Biological Weapons Convention, and the Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty with Russia. The Administration has created its own credibility problem by consistently going its own way instead of being the leader of a world coalition.

Many callers have told me they don't see evidence that Saddam Hussein poses a current threat to the United States. They think terrorism by Al Qaeda is a greater and more immediate danger, and that Iraq is a diversion from our failure to capture Osama bin Laden.

And over and over I've been told that war should be a last resort. Unfortunately, to many of my constituents, the Administration has created the perception that war with Iraq is our first and only resort.

All of those concerns have been on my mind as I've deliberated on this vote. I've spent the good part of these last few weeks listening to experts from this Administration, from the Clinton Administration, and from non-partisan, independent organizations. I've tried to sort out what we know to be true and what we just suspect to be true. And I've tried to evaluate our best course when faced with the uncertain but potentially catastrophic threat that Saddam poses and the unpredictable horror a war can bring.

Eleven years ago, in the face of Saddam's aggression against Kuwait, I voted reluctantly to oppose the use of force. I thought then that more time should be given to diplomacy, and to the enforcement of sanctions against Iraq. But once Congress acted, there was no question of the commitment of all of us to the success of Desert Storm. The liberation of Kuwait was effected; our casualties were thankfully quite small; and stability was, for an extended period of time, restored to the region.

To be certain, many of us thought, and fervently hoped, that the crushing military defeat suffered by Saddam would result in his overthrow. Other monstrous dictators—such as Milosevic in Serbia—have crumbled in the face of far less of an onslaught. It is a mark of Saddam's cunning and ruthlessness that he survived the upheavals in his country that did unfold after the Gulf War, that he is still in power, and that he is still able to oppress his people.

Whether one agrees or disagrees with the Administration's policy towards Iraq, I don't think there can be any question about Saddam's conduct. He has systematically violated, over the course of the past 11 years, every significant U.N. resolution that has demanded that he disarm and destroy his chemical and biological weapons, and any nuclear capacity. This he has refused to do. He lies and cheats; he snubs the mandate and authority of international weapons inspectors; and he games the system to keep buying time against enforcement of the just and legitimate